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DE RUEHIK #0055 3381643
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0502
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS PRIORITY 0377
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RHMFIUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC
RUEHIK/AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI 0545

UNCLAS THESSALONIKI 000055

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DS/IP/RD/EUR, EUR/SE, CA/OCS/ACS, DS/DSS/OSAC, DS/ICI/PII, DS/OP/EUR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PTER](#) [KCRM](#) [GR](#)

SUBJECT: HOSTAGE SITUATION AT THESSALONIKI GERMAN SCHOOL RESOLVED
PEACEFULLY -- AGAIN

REF: 06 THESSALONIKI 0065

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On 02 December, a Greek national with imagined grievances against German authorities infiltrated the Thessaloniki German School while classes were in session armed with guns, explosives, and hand grenades. He held three school officials hostage demanding 10 million Euro ransom. Police responded immediately and professionally, evacuating the children and successfully negotiating the peaceful surrender of the culprit, who had been released from prison only months earlier for having committed the exact same crime in 2006. While this incident involved no Americans and posed no threat to American interests, Post will use it as an opportunity to review emergency procedures with staff at the three American-affiliated educational institutions in Thessaloniki. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On Wednesday, December 2, at 11:00am, 55-year-old Constantinos Arambatzis entered the Thessaloniki German School carrying two suitcases containing 6.5kg of explosives with three detonators, two pistols (Zastave, Scorpion) and three hand grenades. He held Headmaster Rolf Victor Zindenhaus, Vice Director Thomas Miler, and business manager Fontas Altidis hostage, demanding 10 million Euros from the German Consulate General for their release. At 12:00pm the German Consulate informed the police who responded immediately and evacuated the school in cooperation with school officials. At 13:30pm Arambatzis released the three hostages and [claimed contained the explosives - I don't understand what you mean by this]. Police entered into negotiations with Arambatzis and by 15:10pm had managed to secure his surrender without violence.

¶3. (SBU) According to police, Arambatzidis was convicted in 1999 for abducting and blackmailing three Germans to repay debts he owed to German banks and again in May 2006 for holding three adults hostage at the same German school under nearly identical circumstances [reftel]. Arambatzis was discharged from prison in January after serving three years of an 11-year sentence. Police believe he again targeted officials at the German school because he held them accountable for his prior imprisonment. He is currently in custody and will be charged with procurement, assembly, and possession of explosives; illegal weapons possession; attempted blackmail; and kidnapping. Local press reported on 05 December that a warrant has been issued for the arrest of a 60-year-old man from the Thessaly region who allegedly provided the weapons to Arambatzis.

14. (SBU) The German School is located in the eastern suburbs of Thessaloniki, within a 5-10 minute drive of the CGR, the American Farm School, Anatolia College, and Pinewood American International School. To our knowledge, no American children attend the German School nor are there any Amcits employed by the school. Post learned of the incident through press reports rather than via local authorities, however police were collegial and communicative when we contacted them to confirm the press reports and obtain a sitrep. Post informed the three American-affiliated educational institutions of the hostage situation immediately upon learning of it and encouraged school officials to take appropriate security precautions. Thessaloniki police increased their coverage at all international schools as part of their emergency response. While this incident appears particular to Arambatzis and the German School, Post will use it as an opportunity to review emergency procedures with staff at Pinewood, Anatolia and the Farm School.

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